

NCA
VOC FOF IOP/FN
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DAVID LENT/ROME

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ITALIAN POLICE DISPUTE

ANNCR:

A DISPUTE OVER CONTROL OF POLICE IN ITALY IS THREATENING EFFORTS TO FIND A SOLUTION TO THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL CRISIS, NOW IN ITS SIXTH WEEK. FROM ROME, VOA'S DAVID LENT HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

STUDENTS ARE RAMPAGING THROUGH MANY OF ITALY'S UNIVERSITIES, DESTROYING CLASSROOMS AND EQUIPMENT, AND BEATING UP PROFESSORS. HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE DEMANDING WHAT THEY CALL, A POLITICAL FIX THAT IS, A PASSING GRADE WHETHER THEY MEET SCHOLASTIC REQUIREMENT OR NOT. LEFTIST AND RIGHTIST URBAN GUERRILLAS ARE SHOOTING THEIR OPPONENTS. THE LATEST VICTIM WAS A ROME MAGISTRATE SHOT BY LEFTIST GUNMEN OF THE RED BRIGADE.

AGAINST THIS BACKDROP, ITALY'S POLITICAL PARTIES ARE ARGUING ABOUT CONTROL OF THE POLICE. IT'S PART OF AN EFFORT TO HAMMER OUT A PROGRAM UPON WHICH A NEW GOVERNMENT CAN BE FORMED. BUT THE POSITIONS ARE SO FAR APART AND THE ISSUES SO FUNDAMENTAL, THAT THE DISPUTE MAY CAUSE FAILURE OF EFFORTS TO FORM A GOVERNMENT WITHOUT EARLY ELECTIONS.

THE DISPUTE ARISES FROM WHAT AMOUNTS TO AN EFFORT BY THE PARTIES OF THE LEFT, THE COMMUNIST AND THE SOCIALIST, TO GAIN A MEASURE OF INDIRECT CONTROL OVER ITALY'S PUBLIC SECURITY FORCES OR POLICE. THEY ARE DEMANDING DEMILITARIZATION OF THE PUBLIC SECURITY FORCES, AND THE RIGHT OF POLICEMEN TO JOIN LEFTIST DOMINATED UNIONS.

THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS OF PRIME MINISTER DESIGNATE GUILIO ANDREOTTI ARE REJECTING THIS DEMAND. THEY REJECT IT EVEN THOUGH THE LEFT IS CONCEDED THAT POLICE SHOULD NOT GAIN THE RIGHT TO STRIKE AND THAT THOSE POLICEMEN DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN MAINTAINING PUBLIC ORDER IN THE STREETS WOULD COME BACK UNDER MILITARY CONTROL. THE LEFT ARGUES THAT TRADITION IS ON ITS SIDE. THE PUBLIC SECURITY FORCES WERE BROUGHT UNDER MILITARY CONTROL ONLY IN NINETEEN FORTY THREE. AND IT POINTS OUT THAT AT PRESENT THE TOP FIFTEEN HUNDRED POLICE OFFICIALS ARE CIVILIANS WHO MUST AGAINST THEIR WILL SERVE UNDER MILITARY DISCIPLINE.

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS ARGUE AGAINST POLICE UNIONS -- SAYING THAT POLICE RESPONSIBLE FOR PUBLIC SECURITY ARE IN NO WAY COMPARABLE TO NORMAL CIVIL SERVANTS BECAUSE THE POLICE CARRY ARMS AND USE THEM. THEY SAY THAT ARMED POLICE DO NOT HAVE THE SAME LABOR RIGHTS THAT CAN BE ENJOYED BY UNARMED CIVIL SERVANTS. BUT THE CRUX OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION TO THE COMMUNIST DEMAND IS THAT THEY SEE IT AS A BID TO GAIN SUBSTANTIVE POLITICAL CONTROL OVER THE POLICE. IT IS INCONCEIVABLE, THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS SAY, THAT EIGHTY THOUSAND ARMED MEN BE DIRECTLY LINKED WITH TRADE UNIONS. THESE LEFTIST DOMINATED TRADE UNIONS, THEY SAY, HARBOR AMBITIONS EXCEEDING NORMAL UNION ACTIVITY.

ITALY'S UNIONS PUBLICALLY ASSERT THAT THEY AIM TO TRANSFORM SOCIETY. THE POSITIONS ON BOTH SIDES OF THIS ISSUE ARE ADAMANT, AND PROGRESS TOWARD A NEW GOVERNMENT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE UNTIL CONCESSIONS ARE MADE.

JS/PY